RECEIVED
COLCHESTER, CT
2025 FEB 12 PM 2:15
Gayle Furman
GAYLE FURMAN
TOWN CLERK

COLCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Regular Meeting

Tuesday, February 11, 2025
5:30 PM
William J. Johnston Middle School BlackBox Theatre

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT : Chair Donna Antonacci, Vice-Chair Christopher Rivers, Secretary Margo Gignac, Alexander Oliphant, Michelle Millington, Rosemary Gignac and Stefanie Tracey-Calash.

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT : Superintendent Daniel P. Sullivan, III, Assistant Superintendent Jessica L. Kuckel, Director of Pupil Services Eve Hurley, Assistant Director of Pupil Services Rebecca Tedesco, Bacon Academy (BA) Principal Amy Begué, JJIS Assistant Principal Jennifer Reynolds, Colchester Elementary School (CES) Principal Judy O'Meara, CES Assistant Principal Meghan Amado.

OTHERS PRESENT : Director of Finance and Operations Rachel Linkkila, Instructional Technology Coordinator Barbara Johnson, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent Alyssa Fratoni, Director of Educational Operations Andrew Barillari, Student Board Member Brooke Dean, Student Board Member Abigail Stillwell, BA Counselor Ashley Zaugg, Colchester Youth & Social Services Prevention Coordinator Marquis Lawson

1. MEETING OPENING

1.1. Call to Order
Chair Antonacci called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM

1.2 Roll Call
Chair Antonacci, M. Gignac, A.Oliphant, R.Gignac, and S.Tracey-Calash present.
C.Rivers present via Zoom
M.Millington not present at the time of Roll Call.

1.3 Pledge of Allegiance

M.Millington arrived at 5:33 PM

2. RECOGNITIONS / ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2.1. Jack Jackter Intermediate School Recognition

JJIS Assistant Principal Jennifer Reynolds recognized two students, Rivers and Charlotte, on their art award.

3. STUDENT BOARD MEMBERS REPORT

3.1. Report from the Student Board Members

Student Board Member Brooke Dean shared that the student council discussed plans for Valentine's Day activities. The track team recently competed at the Coast Guard Academy, with the boys' team placing first and the girls' team finishing third. Both teams will be competing in State's

this weekend. Additionally, the unified sports team played a recent game against Waterford.

4. *ADDITIONS / CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

4.1. *New Agenda Item
Motion by: M.Gignac
Motion to add Series 3000 Policies to the agenda during Policy Review
Second: R.Gignac
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

5.1. For Public Comments, please see Bylaw on Meeting Conduct

Ralph Bianco, Colchester Commons - Mr. Bianco stated that the magnet program should not be overly discussed in the *Rivereast*. Finances were reviewed with Principal Begue, resulting in a better understanding and confidence that the budget will not be negatively impacted. Both financial and procedural aspects were considered. While the benefits of the program are acknowledged, concerns about accepting outside students are understood. Colchester has a history of welcoming people and students from diverse backgrounds, such as the Ukrainian Church, the Polish Club, and other establishments in town. It was recommended that details about the program be presented publicly or posted on the website. The issue should proceed to a referendum, given the community's vested interest in the school system.

Rae, BA Sophomore - she has participated in cross country and track and it has contributed to becoming a much happier, healthier person and has created a sense of having a second family. Significant time and effort have been dedicated to track, only to risk having that opportunity taken away. The ban against transgender athletes is detrimental to thousands of students and affects children who are in the process of discovering themselves. A private medical decision should not be up for debate, as this directly impacts the lives of those involved. There are far more productive areas to focus on than excluding and isolating a child.

6. *CONSENT AGENDA

6.1. *Approval of Youth Services MOU

Marquis Lawson stated that he state dictated that all communities with a Youth Services department needed to establish an MOU with the District to forge a partnership between Youth Services and the Schools for a full 12 months, not just when school is in session.

Motion by: M.Gignac
Motion to approve
Second: C.Rivers
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

6.2. *Approval of BA Robotics Donation from Tsunami Tsolutions
Motion by: M.Millington
Motion to approve agenda items 6.2, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7 and 6.8
Second: R.Gignac
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

6.3. *Approval of BA Robotics Donation from Dominion
See agenda item 6.2

6.4. *Approval of Regular Meeting Minutes of January 14, 2025
Motion by: M.Gignac

Motion to approve
Second: C.Rivers
Roll Call: 6 yes
1 abstention (S.Tracey-Calash)
Vote: Motion carried

6.5. *Approval of Robotics Field Trip to RI in March
See agenda item 6.2

6.6. *Approval of Robotics Field Trip to MA in March
See agenda item 6.2

6.7. *Approval of Robotics Field Trip to MA in April (pending qualification)
See agenda item 6.2

6.8. *Approval of WJ MathCounts Field Trip to CT in February
See agenda item 6.2

7. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

7.1. Curriculum Committee

Chair Antonacci and Assistant Superintendent Kuckel stated that the Committee is in between meetings currently and looks forward to an update next month.

7.2. Budget Finance Committee

C.Rivers briefly went over the Monthly Report for January, highlighting that the carpet payment came through and the transfers that are under $5,000. He stated that the budget process starts next week.

7.3. Policy Committee

Chair Antonacci went over the First Readings of the Policy Changes for Series 3000:

3000 *Transportation: Bus Drivers's Duties Policy*
3000 *Transportation: Procedures for Bus Safety Policy*
3541.5-F *Request for Bus Stop/Route Change Addition or Deletion Form*
3542.3 *School/Lunch Service*
3542.22 *School Lunch Service Employee's Responsibilities*

These Policies will go to Second Read at the next Regular Meeting.
Policy 3560 *Capital Outlay (now 3100.1)* was reviewed as a First and Second Read.

8. POLICY

8.1. *Policy 3000 *Budgeting System and Procedures*
Motion by: M.Gignac
Motion to approve Policies 3100(previously 3000) *Budgeting Systems* and 3100.1 *Capital Outlay* and to strike policies 3000 *Concept and Roles in Business & Non-Instructional Operations*, 3100 *Budgeting System*, 3110 *Budget Planning*, 3113 *Setting Budget Priorities*, and 3120 *Local Funds* in favor of 3100 *Budgeting Systems* and 3100.1 *Capital Outlay.*
Second: S.Tracey-Calash
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

8.2. *Policy 3541.44 *Transportation of Students by School Employees*
Policy 3541.44 *Transportation of Students by School Employees* will go to Second Read at the

next Regular Meeting.

9. REPORT FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

9.1. HVAC Update

Superintendent Sullivan and Director of Educational Operations Barillari met with HF Lens and felt positive about the conversation. The Recreation Building Committee for HVAC will establish a meeting prior to next week's budget presentation to have a representative join and review options for moving forward with the project at BA. The matter is time-sensitive due to the upcoming expiration of funds.

9.2. Traffic Situation

Superintendent Sullivan stated there was a minor accident at JJIS last week, which was not unexpected given ongoing concerns. A recent safety meeting included discussions between officials and the police department regarding persistent issues on Halls Hill and Norwich Avenue. Increased traffic from student drivers and more parents dropping off students has led to impatience, with drivers crossing the yellow line or passing on the right. Appreciation was expressed for the partnership with Officer Cash and the police department, who have increased their presence and enforcement this week. Drivers are encouraged to remain patient or consider alternate routes.

9.3. District Accreditation

Superintendent Sullivan stated that Fran Kennedy from NEASC met with the administrative team to review the 2023 standards and the new practice of district accreditation. While the district has been eligible for some time, accreditation has only been pursued at the high school level. The current focus is on evaluating all aspects from PreK-12. The administration believes that a full review could be beneficial. The five standards reviewed include learning culture, student learning, professional practices, learning support, and learning resources. If the Board of Education sees value in this process, Fran can be invited to a BOE meeting to provide a broader overview. This is optional, not required, and there is no set timeline. It can take place after the budget season. The Board would like to move forward with this.

9.4. School Safety Follow Up

Superintendent Sullivan stated that the school safety profile is being reviewed to ensure proper monitoring, including having staff at the doors and overseeing school cameras. The administration is evaluating whether there is a need to add more staff and whether to continue with the outside consultant or bring the role in-house. This is being considered as the budget is finalized. The consultant currently reviews the all-hazards plan, ensuring compliance with practices and procedures. They also provide training for safety officers and lead monthly meetings for school safety officials, while in-house professional development is also conducted. However, in the event of an emergency, the consultant is not always present. CES, which is nearly the same size as BA, has one fewer safety officer. It is recommended that the safety director be housed at CES to ensure a district presence when needed. S.Tracey-Calash and C.Rivers support including this in the budget. Student Board Member Dean inquired whether the safety officers would be armed, which is not a requirement but rather a local decision and can and will be discussed at a later time.

10. *PRIORITY DISCUSSION / ACTION ITEMS

10.1. Purposeful Play Presentation

CES Assistant Principal Amado and Kindergarten Teacher Kristine Putorti discussed new legislation requiring the Board of Education to provide play-based learning during the regular school day for PreK and Kindergarten students. The legislation outlines three key criteria: daily practice, the ability to meet students' needs, and the exclusion of electronic devices. This time does not include recess or PE. The approach emphasizes that what is taught is not optional, but how it is taught is flexible. Play-based learning is not a luxury, but a necessity that helps build executive functioning

skills, particularly for children who may not have had these experiences before entering school. Play enhances and accelerates the learning process. The types of play include free play, collaborative play, inquiry, and learning games. Teachers are responsible for aligning activities with standards, setting the environment, providing feedback, asking questions, and observing and documenting progress. The rollout includes introducing free play and various scenarios for children to engage with.

10.2. *Discussion and Possible Action on recommendations from Ad Hoc Budget Committee

M.Gignac went over the summary of expectations of budget requirements from the Ad Hoc Budget Committee.

Motion by: M.Gignac
Motion to approve budget requirements and pilot this model for this budget season.
Second: C.Rivers
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

Motion by: S.Tracey-Calash
Motion to disband the Ad Hoc Budget Committee
Second: C.Rivers
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

10.3. *Presentation, Discussion and Possible Action on recommendations from Ad Hoc Magnet Survey Committee

M.Millington presented the data results of the survey in a SWOT analysis format.

C.Rivers expressed a desire to make a decision before presenting the budget to the Board of Finance, stating there is no value in conducting a second survey.

A.Oliphant agreed with C.Rivers.

R.Gignac disagreed, pointing out that the Rivereast was not used and that a second survey should be sent to them, as the district had committed to conducting it and should fulfill that promise.

M.Gignac echoed R.Gignac's point, emphasizing that it is the district's responsibility to answer the questions raised in the first survey.

Chair Antonacci supported R.Gignac and M.Gignac, suggesting that it would be reasonable to ask a single question in the second survey to address the issues raised from the first survey's results.

S.Tracey-Calash's primary concern was the budget, noting that another survey could have a ripple effect and impact the success of the budget season. She emphasized that the district did not commit to distributing a second survey and agreed with C.Rivers and A.Oliphant.

M.Millington expressed that a second survey would bring in data that would not be comparable to the first survey's results, and she is not in favor of conducting one. She agreed with C.Rivers, S.Tracey-Calash and A.Oliphant.

Motion by: M.Gignac
Motion to send out a second survey with a yes or no question with the proper information attached and reconvene at the March BOE Meeting to give the State an answer.
Second: R.Gignac
Roll Call: Yes: R.Gignac, D. Antonacci and M.Gignac.
No: C.Rivers, S.Tracey-Calash, M.Millington and A.Oliphant.
Vote: Motion Not Carried

C.Rivers stated that we should warn for the March meeting that a final determination about the Magnet Program will be made.

10.4. *Approval of School Year 2025-2026 Calendar
Motion by: M.Gignac
Motion to approve both calendars presented.
Second: S.Tracey-Calash
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

10.5. *Approval of School Year 2026-2027 Calendar
See agenda item 10.4

10.6. *Discussion and Possible Action on Tuition Fees for the 2025-2026 School Year
The decision to set tuition for next year and whether to follow EastConn or LEARN for special education rates is being considered. The final decision will be made during the budget season.

10.7. *Discussion and Possible Action on LED Lighting and budgeting for electricity increases
R.Linkkila stated that the decision regarding locking in an electricity rate will be made when the price is right, as the rates are a moving target. There is also the potential for lower costs if the district participates in an LED lighting promotion, which could result in savings year over year. C.Rivers shared that the Facilities Committee recommended moving forward with the LED lighting initiative.

C.Rivers left the meeting via Zoom at 8:47 PM.

Motion by: S.Tracey-Calash
Motion to approve moving ahead with LED upgrades and budgeting at a 10% increase
Second: M.Gignac
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

10.8. Adjustment to Board of Education March Meeting Schedule
Motion by: M.Gignac
Motion to schedule a Special BOE Meeting on March 4, 2025 at 6:00PM
Second: A.Oliphant
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

10.9. *Discussion and Possible Action on the Impact of changes in Federal Regulations
Superintendent Sullivan stated that action at the federal level affecting education includes several key issues:

Immigration Laws: Written guidance and online workshops are being followed, in accordance with legal guidance from CSDE and Shipman and Goodwin.

School Choice: Federal formula funds may be reduced if students attend other public or private schools, potentially affecting K-12 initiatives.

CEP: The district was close to qualifying for free breakfast and lunch, with adequate funding

for the food service program. The standard percentage for eligibility has changed from 25% to 60% and we are no longer close to meeting the threshold.

Gender Identity: Federal guidance currently states there are only two genders. The district is following state law, with the understanding that this could change in the future.

Athletics: There is an order regarding transgender athletes and which team they should participate on, with participation allowed in the gender students identify with. However, state law and an executive order are in conflict, and no matter the decision, one will be violated. Violating the order could risk federal funding. It is recommended to follow CIAC guidelines and wait for further guidance, with an update planned for the March meeting.

11. REPORT FROM SCHOOL AS LIAISONS

11.1. CES

R.Gignac stated that upcoming and recent events at CES included Family Science Night, a visit from Luna, as well as activities related to the post office and mail trucks, a focus on the forces of motion, after-school clubs, and the Colchester Food Bank.

11.2. JJIS

M.Gignac stated that JJIS has been celebrating the Yearbook cover contest, student achievement boards, 100 day celebrations, snow and sledding on the hill, after school clubs, rocks rally, teacher/student basketball. Thank you to the PTO for providing JJIS with whiteboards.

11.3. WJJMS

M.Gignac stated that WJ has been working on the new schedule, innovations collaborations, pathways to the highschool, the Project-O field trip and the Diaper & Baby Wipe Drive.

11.4. BA

Chair Antonacci stated that BA has recently celebrated Capstone Projects and a Unified Basketball Game. She also shared a video of photos from both events.

12. BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INFORMATION ITEMS

12.1. Next Meeting

Special Meeting on Tuesday, March 4, 2025 at 6:00PM

13. PUBLIC COMMENT

13.1. For Public Comment, please see Bylaw on Meeting Conduct

Michael Dubreuil, Woodbine Road, via Zoom - Mr. Dubreuil raised his concern about previous citizen comments, particularly regarding the assertion that there is no impact on the education budget, which he deemed inaccurate. He stated that he attended every meeting of the roadshow to witness what was presented and to provide opposition. He is ready to push for a tri-board meeting in order to make an informed decision.

Deanna Bouchard, Meadow Drive, via Zoom - Ms. Bouchard extended her thanks to S.Tracey-Calash and M.Millington for their handling of the survey, acknowledging that they represented what the community wanted. It was noted that a request was made by her to pause in November, but that request was ignored, despite the people in the room expressing concerns. Appreciation was also given for voting "no." The Board of Education was encouraged to review some of the comments made. It was mentioned that it is unfortunate the schools are put in a position regarding transgender students. Additionally, the budget committee claimed credit for becoming more transparent, but she pointed out that transparent budget books had been in place prior to the current administration.

Ashley Zaugg, Usher Swamp Road - Ms. Zaugg mentioned that she read every single

response to the survey and was confused by the data presented tonight, noting it did not align with what was shared at the ad hoc meetings. She felt the data was skewed and believed there was a party-based charge and political maneuvering occurring, particularly during an election year. She reminded the Board that they are agents of the state and the people, urging them not to become overly political and to ensure that opportunities for citizens and students are not overshadowed. She stressed that Colchester is about people, not politics, and that the decision on how to use the data should be made with this in mind.

14. PROPOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by: M.Gignac
Motion to go into Executive Session with Superintendent Sullivan.
Second: A.Oliphant
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

The Board and Superintendent Sullivan entered into Executive Session at 9:29 PM
The Board and Superintendent Sullivan returned from Executive Session at 10:13 PM

14.1. *Proposed Executive Order Session for Mid-Year Evaluation of the Superintendent
14.2. *Proposed Executive Session for discussion of Non-Union / Non-Certified Employees

Motion by: M.Gignac
Motion to set the Non-Union/Non-Certified Employees salary increases for the upcoming Fiscal Year at a 3.75% increase, which is equal to the median for all other personal contracts.
Second: A.Oliphant
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

Motion by: S.Tracey-Calash
Motion to set the Director of Finance and Operations salary at $166,079 for the upcoming fiscal year, which is at the median for like districts.
Second: M.Gignac
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

15. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by: M.Millington
Motion to adjourn.
Second: A.Oliphant
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

Chair Antonacci adjourned the meeting at 10:14 PM

Respectfully submitted,

AFratoni

Alyssa Fratoni
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent